

Wesley United Methodist Church

February, 8, 2015

“Time Out!”

Mark 1:29-39

In today’s story, Jesus heals Simon Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever. After Jesus heals the man with the unclean spirit, they went with James and John to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew. Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. Mark tells us, “The fever left her and she began to wait on them.”

Well, so much for the role of women in that time. “She began to wait on them.” No rest for the weary. She was well, so she was able to fill her expected role in the household. But, of course, the point to the story is that Jesus healed her and the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door. The next morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” It was evident that, from time to time, Jesus needed a time out. He needed to get away by himself. Anyone here ever feel like that? It goes with modern life, doesn’t it? Jesus needed time out and so often he would rise early and go off to a solitary place. “Everyone is looking for you!” his disciples would report. But that time out was essential to the effectiveness of Jesus’ ministry.

You and I need to learn to take “time out” as well. Our lives become so frantic. So chaotic. With all there is to do, we can lose our soul if we aren’t careful. Taking time out is as much a part of Christian living as taking up the cross of Christian service. And for some reasons, Jesus needed time out.

Jesus needed time alone to pray. That’s remarkable when you consider what we know about Jesus the Son of God. Only begotten of the Father. Yet he needed time for prayer. Jesus knew from first-hand experience what a powerful force prayer can be in human life.

There is a story that comes out of World War II. After the Battle of the Bulge, a German officer was describing the capture of an American unit early in the fighting. This unit had in its possession a box which contained a cake. What was remarkable about the cake is that it had been sent to an American soldier from Boston and it was still fresh. This German officer described his feelings when he realized that the Americans had the resources to fly over cakes from home even in the midst of a global war. He said that he knew then, that they would never defeat an enemy that had such resources for the waging of the battle.

You and I have a resource that can help us in life’s daily battles, if only we will make room for it.

It is time alone with God. It is one-on-one communication with our Creator. We human creatures are so very strange. We will believe almost anything except what millions of people have rested their lives on over the past two thousand years. That the God of all the universe is available through prayer. Why in the world do we not make use of this amazing resource?

Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China whose life has touched millions. Traveling in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow, sleeping in the very poorest of inns at night, it was not easy for him to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Those who traveled with him testify that after others had quieted down at night for sleep, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight. This told them that Hudson Taylor was pouring over his little Bible. It was his custom to spend from two to four a.m. in prayer. Hudson Taylor considered finding time to spend with God the hardest part of his work as missionary.

It is so easy to neglect that which is most important to our lives. Jesus needed time for prayer. And Jesus needed time to focus on his primary mission. We can sympathize with the Lord's dilemma. So many people whom he met needed a doctor. Think how many people are on our prayer list, and yet people in Jesus' time were not nearly as fortunate as we. They lived in pre-scientific times. A simple infection could bring an agonizing death. Epidemics could wipe out entire villages. Many of the diseases that effected people in Jesus' times are unheard of today. We are so fortunate to live in a time when doctors can do so much for us. I could not even imagine a world without the advantages of modern medicine. Of course, doctors are human beings, too. And not all of them have the interest of the patient at heart. Jesus did. His heart went out to all the sick and hurting people who came to him for help. But healing people's physical bodies wasn't Jesus' primary mission. We need to understand this. If healing people were Jesus' main purpose for coming into the world, he could have set up a clinic in downtown Jerusalem. It would have been flooded with needy people day and night. But it would never have been possible for him to see them all.

Jesus' plan was much bigger. It is important that we understand this, too. His plan was to touch the lives of a few man and women who, on the Day of Pentecost, would be transformed into a mighty spiritual army, the church of Jesus Christ. And over the centuries, this spiritual army would build tens of thousands of hospitals and schools and all manner of charitable institutions all over the world. And millions of people would be touched by the ministry of Jesus through his church. His followers would heal many millions more than he could possibly touch in a lifetime.

This was Christ's plan from the beginning. That's why he needed time out from his healing ministry. He needed to spend time with his Father and he needed to refocus his ministry.

Jesus said to those disciples who came to find him, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That's why I have come." And that's why he came primarily. Not to heal bodies, but to inspire hearts. He came that he might preach the kingdom of God.

That's why Jesus needed time out--to spend time with God. I wonder if many of us don't need time out as well. Are you spending the time you need in prayer? Does your life need to be refocused?

You and I live in a fast-changing and complex world. If we're not careful, we will find ourselves majoring in minors, ignoring the really crucial needs in our lives. But how do we do it? How do we find time for this essential practice of taking time out to connect with God and to reflect on our lives?

For starters, you will never FIND time for prayer and reflection, you have to MAKE time. Someone once said: "In the pure, strong hours of the morning when the soul of the day is at best, lean upon the window sill of the Lord and look into His face, and get orders for the day. Then go out into the world with a sense of God's Hand upon your shoulder..."

If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, how much more do you and I need to spend time in prayer? If he needed to call time out in order to refocus his ministry, how much more do we need to reflect upon our lives and reorder our priorities?

Take time to pray. There is an invaluable resource available to us all. Let God help you to determine those things that are most important in your life.